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**The Humane Society
of the United States**

Special Report On Hunting

July 1974 Revision

The Humane Society contends that the use of amateur hunters to reduce an overabundant deer herd does not conform with the principles of sound wildlife management.

A young doe picks her way through the forest, nibbling on berries from low lying shrubs as she goes. The grace with which she moves is a perfect complement to the lush greenness of the forest. Suddenly, she stiffens. She turns her head quickly, sensing danger. Before she can flee, the air is sliced by a high pitched whistling,

LAURENCE PRINGLE



and an arrow pierces her rear flank. She pulls herself back onto her feet and, with blood spurting from the wound, dashes clumsily into the darkness of the forest, bumping into trees and scraping the protruding arrow as she goes.

"She's lucky," you think. "She got away." But is she? What veterinarian will remove the arrow and dress her wound? A quick death would have been more merciful than the slow one from loss of blood or gangrene that almost certainly awaits her.

In the words of one expert bow and arrow hunter, "Archers, by limiting themselves to the antiquated bow and arrow, knowingly commit each living thing they hit to lingering agony." "Far from being sporting, it is cruel and inhumane," he said. The

same bowman reported that he and a companion, both holders of the Expert A Class rating in the National Field Archery Association, brought home only 2 of 14 deer they had hit over a four-year period. The other animals almost certainly died of their wounds after having escaped.

Other statistics confirm this hunter's observations. During a recent hunt of sika deer on the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia, 34 deer were reported killed, while hunters reported wounding an additional 33. In another season at the same refuge, only 4 were killed, while 9 were reported wounded. And there were undoubtedly additional hunters who would not admit or were unaware of having crippled an animal.

The Humane Society of the United States, while recognizing there is sometimes a need to cull herds of deer and other wild animals to prevent death by starvation and overbrowsing of habitat, is strongly opposed to any method that does not deliver an instant and reasonably merciful death. It has long been opposed to permitting untested, less-than-expert hunters to act as game managers for the nation's animals. It is equally opposed to permitting the use of antiquated weapons, such as the bow and arrow and the muzzle loading gun.

"Archers, by limiting themselves to the antiquated bow and arrow, knowingly commit each living thing they hit to lingering agony."



An arrow in the hind quarter resulted in slow death to this buck, found later on the forest floor.

It is a cruel method of wildlife management that permits the use of a weapon with only a fraction of the shocking power of a high powered rifle, such as the bow and arrow. "An arrow has virtually no shocking power," concedes the bowman quoted above. "It makes an ugly, cutting wound like a knife. An animal struck by a *well-placed* arrow bleeds to death."

Equally as ineffective is the buckshot, which produces an irregular pattern of wounds. When buckshot fails to kill an animal upon contact, it stays embedded in the victim. It can cause infection that will eventually bring death from weakness and fever. In the buckshot shooting of black tailed deer in the Chaparral in California, career conservation officials estimated crippling losses

at 40% of the take-home kill. A recent winter count of dead deer by the Michigan Department of Conservation showed that of 74,000 deer carcasses found, some 30,000 apparently had died slowly from hunting wounds.

If proof of inaccuracy isn't enough to disqualify most sport hunters from the role of game managers, the government should consider hunters' penchant for "trophy" animals. Any well-educated game manager will tell you that overpopulation of deer can be reduced only by removing the females. Yet it is the buck, with his majestic antlers, that every hunter wants. The U.S. Department of the Interior reported that of animals crippled and later found dead from gunshot wounds, 42% were fawns, 25% does, and 7% bucks, which the department interpreted as meaning that hunters made a greater effort to recover antlered animals. When a state fish and game department declares a "does only" hunting season, many sport hunters and

The Humane Society is strongly opposed to any method of culling herds of deer that does not deliver an instant and reasonably merciful death.

hunting clubs refuse to participate. In a does-and-bucks season some hunting clubs go as far as encouraging their members to buy the limited number of does permits and not use them. Such action belies the hunters' own claims of acting as game managers. And there is good reason to believe that many hunters do not follow the rules set forth by state or federal regulatory agencies.

State fish and game commissions are so tightly controlled by hunting interests that wildlife conservation and management points of view are seldom represented. In New Jersey, for instance, Mrs. Basil Peter Andrews, a member of the HSUS New Jersey Branch board of directors, sought membership on the state fish and game council but was rejected because she did not represent hunting or fishing interests. Among changes non-hunters such as Mrs. Andrews would make in the New Jersey law is raising the minimum age qualification for a hunting license from the present 10 years (if application is made by parent or guardian). Under Virginia law, there is no minimum age for the

issuance of a hunting license.

The Humane Society of the United States has worked since its founding in 1954 to educate federal and state governmental

Until then, Interior had operated under a policy of opening wildlife refuges to public hunting except when it could provide "defensible reasons for not authorizing it." That policy was established in 1967 by Interior Secretary Stuart Udall and was interpreted by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife as "a mandate to hunt unless it could be demonstrated that a given hunting program would be detrimental to the overall refuge program."

In its suit against Interior, The Humane Society contended that the use of bows and arrows, antique muzzle-loading guns, and buckshot-loaded guns on three specific refuges did not conform with principles of sound wildlife management. It contended that the Secretary of the Interior had abused his authority by authorizing public hunts at Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey, Eastern Neck Wildlife Refuge in Maryland, and Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia.

HSUS learned of Interior's reassessment when it obtained a copy of an official



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officials to the need for efficient and humane methods of wildlife management. In February 1973 the Society took the federal government to court to challenge its methods of reducing deer herds on federal wildlife refuges. Although HSUS did not win the case, the suit and related publicity caused the U.S. Department of the Interior to reassess its entire approach to game management on wildlife refuges.

memorandum dated Jan. 11, 1973, from E. V. Schmidt, director of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, to Nathaniel P. Reed, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. In that memo, Schmidt cited The Humane Society's suit and its *Special Report on Hunting* (originally distributed in 1972) as sources of pressure that resulted in his decision to reassess refuge wildlife management procedures.

"It has only been in the past few months with the growing opposition by the non-hunting public and the legal challenge by The Humane Society that we have had reason to reflect on this important aspect of refuge use by the public," Schmidt said.

He went on to say that he believed the bureau should take the initiative to "clean up" refuge hunting programs. To accomplish this, he said the bureau will (a) determine the efficiency of various weapons, (b) determine the crippling losses for each type weapon, and (c) study the effectiveness of the various types of hunting programs as methods of herd reduction.

In the meantime, Schmidt said the bureau will take a "comprehensive look" at all its hunting programs to determine how they may be improved administratively. The bureau's goals in this review, he said, will be to make the hunts of (a) better quality for the hunter, (b) cleaner for the hunted, and (c) acceptable to all but the most vehement anti-hunting segment of the non-hunting public.

As part of the review, Schmidt said the bureau will consider establishing qualifying tests for hunters that would determine each hunter's ability to use the weapon and the condition of the weapon. He said the use of high-powered rifles or rifled slugs in shotguns may be considered for public hunts.

"It would seem that hunters and our bureau must be willing to accept some changes in the way we get at this business of hunting," he concluded. "The alternative is probably that we do not hunt."



FRITZ HENLE

Schmidt's memorandum confirmed HSUS's contention that the bow and arrow is an inefficient weapon. From 10 typical refuge archery hunts, including Chinco-teague and Eastern Neck, the number of animals wounded but not immediately taken averaged 44.5%, Schmidt reported.

Said Schmidt: "Even if we assume that most of the deer that are hit by arrows and escape temporarily are ultimately taken by subsequent shots and do in fact wind up in the hunter bag, there is still the question of the pain sustained by the animal during the interval from the time of the first hit to the final one. It is in this area of concern that The Humane Society takes issue with archery and

other types of hunting, and at this point in time we simply are not prepared to debate the issue."

Schmidt went on to say that archers in general either lack the capability for placing shots that result in clean, quick kills, or they are not willing to exercise adequate judgment in taking only those shots that are likely to result in clean kills.

The basic issue that still must be resolved is how much longer this small but powerful group of "sportsmen" who kill for pleasure will be permitted to dictate to the federal government, which is charged with managing the wildlife "in trust" for all of the people.

The Humane Society is determined to get sound, rational wildlife management techniques established within the federal government. As a step toward that goal, HSUS has taken its suit against the Department of the Interior to the U.S. Court of Appeals. It is confident that the non-hunting majority of the American public will support its efforts wholeheartedly.

Additional copies of this report are available at 3¢ each from The Humane Society of the United States, 1604 K St., N.W., Washington, D. C. 20006.